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MEMORIAL

OF THE

NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

IN RELATION TO

Statistics of the agriculture of the United States.

January 23, 1849.

Referred to the select Committee on the Census, and ordered to be printed.

To the honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled:

Your memorialists, the State Agricultural Society of the State of New York, respectfully showeth, that they are engaged in efforts for the discovery and diffusion of agricultural science, and that one of the most serious obstacles to their success is the want of reliable facts, accurately observed and perspicuously stated.

Your memorialists deem it unnecessary, in this day of enlightenment and civilization, to offer any arguments to convince your honorable body of the importance of agricultural improvements, of the blessings which He confers on the human family, who teaches the cultivator of the soil to make "two blades of grass to grow where only one grew before."

The simple fact that our whole population depend upon the soil for nineteen-twentieths of their food, and for all their clothing, and that four-fifths of our citizens are actually engaged in the cultivation of the soil, are in themselves sufficient, without other arguments and illustrations, to press the unspeakable importance of the subject on the minds of wise and patriotic legislators.

Your memorialists are deeply impressed with the belief that governments are instituted amongst men for high and beneficial purposes; that they have the ability, and that it is their duty to perform, all those services for the governed which may advance their happiness, security, and progress in civilization, and which individuals, either singly or by voluntary associations, are too weak or too ignorant to accomplish for themselves.

Your memorialists bring no accusation against their rulers; they utter no complaints of the disproportionate share which agriculture has received of their attention; but they respectfully invite your honorable body to compare the amounts which have been appropriated in previous years to the army and navy, and similar instruments of devastation and woe, with those which have been awarded to those useful arts which bring peace and plenty to the cottage of the poor, and comfort and satisfaction to the homes and hearths of every class and condition of society.

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Although the doctrine has been promulgated by statesmen of no mean fame, that governments can best promote the cause of agriculture by letting it alone, yet we trust that this cold, illiberal dogma has no weight or authority in your honorable body. It is opposed by facts so numerous, so notorious, and so overwhelming. The contrast between the virtue, intelligence, and happiness of the inhabitants of those nations where agriculture has been steadily and liberally fostered by government, and those where it has been coldly neglected, or arbitrarily oppressed, is so plain and striking that he who runs may read.

Amongst the governments who have distinguished themselves by their fostering care of agriculture, Belgium stands confessedly foremost; her legislators have been the most steady, the most systematic, and the most liberal in efforts for the advancement of agriculture, and of those arts which are most subservient to its improvement. The results are pregnant with instruction to all the governments and people of the earth. On 13,000 square miles of land, which is the total area of this kingdom, 4,200,000 inhabitants are not only supported abundantly, but at least one-half of the annual crop is left for exportation.

The efforts of the Belgian government for the advancement of agricultural science have not only benefitted the husbandman alone, but has fostered every department of human industry, and mightily swelled every stream of national prosperity, adding another to the already numerous examples of the fact, that a prosperous condition of agriculture is the most solid basis of national wealth and power. The coal mines in the province of Hainault alone produce more than all those of France; the manufactures of iron are one-fourth those of England, and one-half those of France. The woolens of ——— alone employ 40,000 workmen; and the linens furnish occupation to 400,000 persons, while the cotton manufacture employs a capital of at least $15,000,000. The tonnage employed in her commerce swelled from 138,945 tons in 1829, to 225,759 tons in 1837. This wonderful exhibition of industry and wealth is rendered still more interesting by the fact that crime is actually diminishing, while in every other European State it is positively increasing. The average annual number of persons accused of crime in Belgium, was—

From 1826 to 1830, 767; or 1 to every 5,007 inhabitants.
From 1831 to 1834, 620; or 1 to every 6,724 "

We submit the facts which show how richly agriculture rewards the patronage of the State, and with entire confidence leave their application to the wisdom and sagacity of your honorable body.

That the increase and diffusion of agricultural science will add enormously to the aggregate wealth of this nation, will be apparent from a consideration of the results of enlightened and unenlightened cultivation.

The average crop of Indian corn in this country will not average 40 bushels to the acre, while scientific farmers have demonstrated that the soil may be made to produce 120 bushels per acre; showing the loss from ignorance of the true principles of agriculture to be 300 per cent. The report from the Patent Office estimates the number of bushels of corn raised in 1847 at 539,350,000 bushels, and taking 40 cents as the average price per bushel, its value was $215,740,000. If this crop was increased, as it might be by judicious culture, 300 per cent., 1,618,050,000 bushels,

at $647,220,000, making an annual addition to our national wealth of $431,480,000 from this single crop.

The average production of wheat is in this country about 15 bushels to the acre, which might be increased to 60 bushels per acre, or 400 per cent. According to the same authority, 1,114,245,500 bushels were raised last year, which being increased by 400 per cent. will amount to 456,982,000 bushels; which, at an average of $1 per bushel, would give $342,736,500 as the annual reward for scientific cultivation.

The possibility of securing this brilliant prize for our country, surpassing in richness and magnitude the wildest fancies of a California dream, is no theoretical speculation; it is a simple comparison of what *really* is, with what scientific farmers have repeatedly and practically demonstrated *can be done*.

Before agriculture can be reduced to an exact science, which will enable a farmer to predict in the spring with some degree of certainty what will be the amount of his crop in the fall, certain data must be collected which have never yet been obtained, and which can only be acquired by the agency of government. Among these are—

1st. *A knowledge of the influence of climate on production.*—It is perfectly well known that too much or too little rain, too much or too little warmth will spoil any crop whatever. It is also known, that for the perfect elaboration of any crop, that one stage of its growth requires wetness and warmth, while others require dryness, and others coolness. It is one of the most important desiderata of agriculture to ascertain these periods with precision, as well as the exact degree of humidity and warmth which are most propitious to the full development of a given crop.

This knowledge can never be acquired by any single farmer, or even any association of farmers; full and particular meteorological tables must be kept for a series of years in every town in the Union, and the weight and measure of every important crop must be annually ascertained for equivalent periods, when a careful comparison of the two sets of observations will give a tolerable approximation to the knowledge we are in quest of, the accuracy of which will be increased in every succeeding year.

2d. *A knowledge of the influence of soil on production.*—We have a great number of analyses of soils, but these having been made with reference to particular farms, and without any view to the elaboration of general principles, their value in agricultural science is exceedingly limited. If a general and systematic examination of the soils in every township of the Union could be made, each analysis would not only possess its own individual value, but a far greater relative value, as we should have the advantage of comparing it with all the rest.

Were we in possession of these data, it would be easy to mark out on the map every town whose annual production of any given species of grain exceeded the *average* production of the Union, and then to compare the soils and climates of those towns with each other, and with those less favored also.

In this way the farmers of each town would know with almost mathematical certainty what crop he could raise most cheaply, and cease to expend his labor on those, which from natural causes, will not, in the long run, remunerate him for his capital and labor; while it would enable scientific agriculturists to expend their efforts on those branches of inquiry where real anomalies exist.

Your memorialists therefore pray that your honorable body would create either a distinct department, to be called the HOME DEPARTMENT, which shall have especial charge of the united interests of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, or an agricultural bureau, to be attached to some of the existing departments, which shall be devoted to the collection of facts for the elucidation of the vexed questions of agriculture, the collection and distributing of seeds and animals from abroad which may serve to multiply the objects of agricultural industry; to search for the best methods of destroying noxious weeds and insects; to test and investigate the value of new agricultural implements; and in all possible ways to promote the interests of the farmers of our country.

Your memorialists further pray, that the census about to be taken may, in addition to the agricultural statistics collected in the last, embrace the following points of inquiry:

1st. The number of acres of cultivated and the number of acres of uncultivated land in each farm. By "cultivated" we mean land from which crops are, or may be taken annully?

2d. The cost of cultivating and transporting to market each kind of grain; and also hay, tobacco, and cotton?

3d. The amount per acre raised of each kind of grain; as also hay, tobacco, and cotton?

4th. The price per month paid for labor; and if slave labor, the average cost per month?

5th. The time during which cattle were fed wholly on pasture during the year 1848?

6th. The kinds of fruit most easily raised and in the greatest perfection; and also the price at the nearest market?

7th. The most useful and easily procured manures?

8th. Statistics of the potato disease.—The time when the disease made its first appearance in 1848? The amount destroyed by the disease? Were any signs of the disease apparent in the tuber before decay commenced in the vines?

On behalf of the executive committee of the New York State Agricultural Society.

B. P. JOHNSON,
Corresponding Secretary.